

April 7, 2025
Historical Architectural Review Board
Certificate of Appropriateness
Preliminary Review Sheet

File Number: HDC-2025-00021
Address: 412 N 8th Street
District: Old Allentown
Applicant/Owner: Edward Justiniano

Building Description:

This 2½-story brick row house, ca 1875, is Eastlake in style as typified by the incised wooden window and door lintels. The gable roof has slate shingles, dormer, projecting bracketed eaves, a cornice of zinc plate and a single chimney with drip ledges. Other Eastlake influenced architectural features include the incised door frame and the gingerbread trim on the dormer and clam shell shutter dogs. The 1st floor windows have 1/1 sashes with paneled shutters while the 2nd floor window have 2/2 sashes with louvered shutters. The main door is a glazed period door with a rectangular transom. The grocer's alley door is a wooden period door which has a transom as well. The foundation is faced with stone and displays two basement window grilles. Some of the changes from 1910's were the glazed front door, removal of the center muntins in the windows on the 1st floor making them 1/1 sashes, and the addition of the cement porch. In the 1940's a rear addition was slightly enlarged and a story was added to it. In the 1980's the cement front porch was removed.

Project Description: Applicant proposes to legalize the installation of concrete steps and two black handrails along the 8th street elevation at 412 8th Street after receiving a letter from the insurance company requiring attention concerning the repair the porch steps and to installation of a handrail.

Property History:

- **May 8, 1979**-COA issued for the installation of paneled shutters on the first-floor story in the rear and louvered shutters on the second story windows and dormer windows also in the rear.
- **October 21, 1981**-COA issued for the installation of wooden steps along the 8th street elevation.

Violations: January 3, 2025-Concrete steps and 2 metal handrails installed without Certificate of Appropriateness (COA).

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ORIGINAL STEP CONDITION (GOOGLE IMAGE 2023)



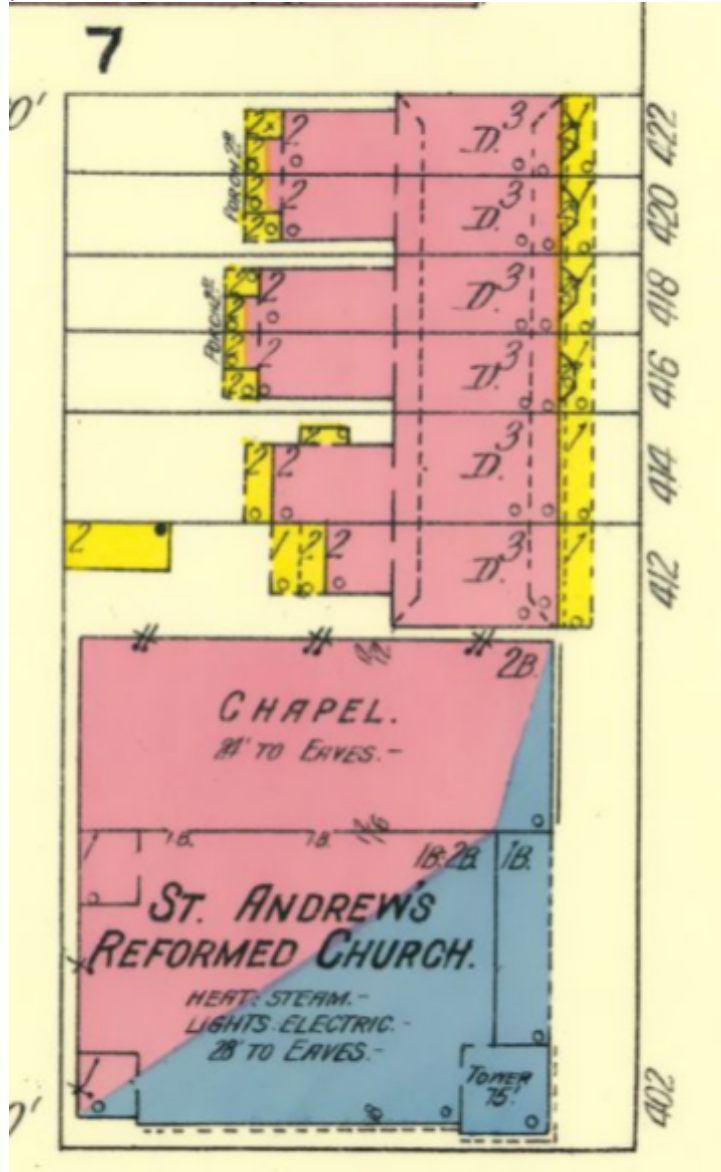
CURRENT CONDITION (APPLICANT IMAGE)

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Porches 3.7

3.7.4 Replace individual deteriorated components in-kind with new materials matching the original in material composition, size, shape, profile, dimension, appearance, and finish. Custom fabrication is encouraged and may be necessary to provide an exact match. Where an exact match of the historic element cannot be found or fabricated, the new element should match the original as closely as possible.



3.7.5 Retain and repair original handrails or railings. Replace in-kind if repair is not feasible. Replacement handrails should match the existing in material, size, and appearance as closely as possible. Installation of handrails where they did not previously exist is generally not recommended due to the visual and physical impact on historic fabric; however, installation of a simple, compatible design may be acceptable for the purpose of safety and ease of access.

3.7.6 Consider restoration of previously altered porches with historically appropriate elements. Consult historic photographs to identify the original appearance. If the building is part of a pair or an attached row that was designed together, consult nearby buildings for examples.

Observations & Comments:

Staff was notified that wooden steps that had been installed at 412 N 8th Street had been removed and replaced with concrete steps. In addition to the installation of concrete steps the owner also installed two black metal hand railings leading to the main entrance.

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This property is part of a row of Eastlake styled homes constructed in the late 18th century along the 400 block of 8th street in the Old Allentown Historic District. During a site visit staff observed various styles of porch steps along the western side of 8th Street ranging from concrete, brick, and stone slab, all of which had metal handrails installed apart from 434 N 8th. The installation of the wooden steps was proposed and approved by City Council in 1981 after the previous concrete steps began to deteriorate. With this approval, 412 N 8th became the only property on the 400 block of 8th Street to have wooden steps leading to the main entrance. It is unsure why the previous property owner selected wood as the materials to construct the steps.

Front porches and entry steps are distinctive characteristics of Allentown's historic architecture and streetscapes and should be retained and preserved.

In reference the Historic Design Guidelines wood, masonry, and concrete are the typical historic materials for porches. Common historic materials for entry steps include concrete, granite, brick with bluestone landings, and marble. Many porches in the historic districts have already undergone one or several alterations. Although these materials are existing and may have been intact for many decades, it



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is not desirable to replace them in-kind. From a historic preservation perspective, restoration of the original materials or appearance is preferred.

The instalment of concrete steps and handrailing's at 412 N 8th Street fronting 8th street does not negatively impact the architectural integrity of the block but staff would encourage integrating a bullnose design to the preexisting steps, if possible, to more closely match existing concrete steps.

Staff Recommendations:

Approval, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 7 Porches and Steps.

Presenters:

- Mr. Jones presented the application.
- Edward Justiniano represented the application.

Discussion: Mr. Justiniano stated that his insurance company required the replacement of steps and installation of the railings. Mr. Huber noted that the step material and railings are appropriate per the Guidelines, but that the steps should have a bullnose to be consistent with the historic style. Mr. Huber noted that the bullnose is something that cannot be added afterwards; it is poured with the rest of the steps. The HARB discussed if concrete steps without a bullnose is appropriate, with respect to the Guidelines, and other examples of steps along the street.

Actions: Ms. Westerman moved to approve the application as presented on April 7, 2025, for the legalization of concrete entry steps and railings at 612 N 8th Street, following sections of the Guidelines for Historic Districts: Chapter 3, 3.7-Porches and Steps and find no circumstances unique to the property. Mr. Hart seconded the motion, which carried with unanimous support and no abstentions.